

University of Puget Sound Sound Ideas

Summer Research

2011

The Construction of the Curia Julia

Will Roundy
wroundy@pugetsound.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/summer_research



Part of the [Classics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Roundy, Will, "The Construction of the Curia Julia" (2011). *Summer Research*. Paper 117.
http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/summer_research/117

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Sound Ideas. It has been accepted for inclusion in Summer Research by an authorized administrator of Sound Ideas. For more information, please contact soundideas@pugetsound.edu.

Early in 44 BCE, the Roman Senate assigned Julius Caesar the task of rebuilding the Curia in a new location.¹ Although he was eager to undertake this assignment, his murder on March 15 prevented him from finishing the project. The new Curia, the Curia Julia, named for Caesar and Augustus's *gens*, was not dedicated until 29 BCE.² This project took 15 years to complete largely due to the concurrent political turmoil. The progress that Caesar had made toward the construction of the building before his murder has been debated. The current scholarly preference is to assume that Caesar had made some degree of progress on the Curia reconstruction project during the last couple of months before his death, amid his preparations for his campaign against the Parthians.³ However, closer reads of Augustus's *Res Gestae* and of Cassius Dio suggest that although the Curia's location had been determined prior to his murder, Caesar had not yet begun construction of the Curia before his death and that Augustus is to be credited for the construction of the building. Nevertheless for both men, the Curia project was part of a larger scheme to bring order to Rome.

¹ Use of the Latin *curia* is flexible and often ambiguous. It can be used for the main *curiae* of the Forum Romanum (e.g. the Curia Hostilia) or for a chamber of another building designated for the purpose of meetings of the Senate. For instance, Suetonius uses *curia* for the Curia Hostilia (Suet. *Iul.* 76.1, 80.2) and the Curia Julia (Suet. *Aug.* 53.3), but also for the chamber in the Theater of Pompey, sometimes specifying the complex (Suet. *Iul.* 80.4, 81.3)—as does Livy (Livy *Per.* 116.3)—and sometimes not (Suet. *Iul.* 81.4). Specification problems also arise in the Greek sources. Appian claims that βουλευτήριον is the best translation of *curia* (App. *BCiv.* 4.8-11) and uses it often, without reference to the particular βουλευτήριον he means, with the result that in some cases, context, such as the murder of Caesar, referenced in many places (App. *BCiv.* 2.1, 3.9, 4.8), will reveal his intended βουλευτήριον, while in other cases, the exact location cannot be guessed, as in App. *BCiv.* 3.93, which contains a reference to a βουλευτήριον at a time during which the Forum's *curia* did not exist, and elsewhere (e.g. App. *BCiv.* 3.58). Plutarch also favors the Greek βουλευτήριον (Plut. *Cat. Min.* 43.4) and Cassius Dio also uses this term—ambiguously in some instances (Dio Cass. 44.5.1, 44.16.2) and with specificity in others (Dio Cass. 51.22.1). For the purpose of this study, I will use “*curia*” to designate any chamber intended for the Senate and “the Curia” to designate the main Senate House in the Forum, when reference to a particular construction is inappropriate.

² I will use the title Augustus to refer to Octavian before and after 27 BCE.

³ Some scholars claim that Caesar simply planned the location of the new Curia (cf. Peter J. Aicher, *Rome Ailve: A Source-Guide to the Ancient City*, Vol. 1. (Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2004), 88; Amanda Claridge, *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 70), while others claim that he began construction (cf. L. Richardson Jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 103).

Limited knowledge of the Curia prior to the first century BCE exists. According to Varro, the Curia Hostilia dates to the reign of King Tullus Hostilius (Varro *Ling.* 5.155). If Varro can be trusted, that puts the construction of the original Curia in the mid-seventh century BCE. The earliest paving of the Comitium, the space that stood before the Curia, is also dated to the seventh century BCE, so Varro's attribution of the building to King Hostilius is reasonable, though uncertain.⁴ The Curia Hostilia was also designated as a *templum* by the augurs so that the Senate could legally pass decrees within (Gell. *NA* 14.7.7). The orientation of the Curia Hostilia was most likely on a north-south axis, south-facing, and its orientation may have been chosen for the purposes of augury.⁵ Beyond these meager details, little else is known about the early Curia before the first century BCE, beyond some of the artworks and statues displayed in and around the building that are discussed by Pliny the Elder.

The Curia Hostilia was interlinked with the Comitium and the Rostra. The Comitium had been created for the purpose of public assemblies and lawsuits (Varro *Ling.* 5.155), and by the third century, it had become an amphitheater with steps on a north-south axis with Curia directly to the north and with the Rostra to the south.⁶ The Rostra, named for the beaks of enemy ships fastened to the platform after the battle of Antium in 338 BCE (Varro *Ling.* 5.155; Plin. *HN* 34.20), was a *templum* (Livy *Hist.* 8.14.12) from which speakers addressed political bodies and the people, where public funerals were held, and where men were honored with statues.

⁴ Claridge, 73.

⁵ This orientation can be guessed by consulting Pliny the Elder's explanation of the methods used to determine the legal Roman sunrise and sunset, which were observed from the Curia, prior to the use of sundials (Plin. *HN* 7.212).

⁶ Claridge, 73; Richardson, 97; Aicher, 87.

In the first half of the first century BCE, the Curia and the Comitium area underwent a series of transformations. Sulla (ca. 80 BCE), during his dictatorship, rebuilt the Curia (Plin *HN* 34.26; Dio Cass. 40.50.3), and the new structure may have received a new name, in honor of Sulla's *gens*, depending on one's read of Cassius Dio.⁷ If the name had changed, it would have been called the Curia Cornelia. The reason for this reconstruction is probably due to the fact that Sulla enlarged the Senate, adding 300 members and in effect doubling the size of the body (App *BCiv.* 1.100).

Although Sulla's Curia was still quite new, it was rebuilt once more before it moved, because the building burnt. In 52 BCE, Clodius was killed by a political rival, Milo, and his entourage. During the riotous funeral for Clodius, his body was displayed on the Rostra and soon after, carried into the Curia and burnt on a pyre assembled from the furniture within the building. The building caught fire and the blaze spread to some nearby buildings (App. *BCiv.* 2.21; Dio Cass. 40.49.1-3). It is probable that the nearby Basilica Porcia and the Comitium amphitheater were damaged or likewise destroyed in this fire, and since there is no mention of the reconstruction of either structure after the fire, it is likely that they disappeared. The Senate then assigned Faustus Sulla, son of the dictator, to rebuild the Curia, and this was completed some time before Caesar's dictatorship (Dio Cass. 40.50.1-3).

Slightly prior to the fire of 52 BCE, the northern Forum was complicated by the beginnings of Caesar's rearrangement plan.⁸ The Forum Julium, conceived in or before 54 BCE and dedicated in 46 BCE, was intended for the transaction of public business

⁷ According to Dio, Sulla's name was inscribed on the Curia (Dio Cass. 44.5.2), but whether the building was still called the Curia Hostilia is uncertain. Dio himself hints that the name of the building was still the Curia Hostilia elsewhere in his history (Dio Cass. 40.50.3, 44.5.1, 45.17.8).

⁸ This plan is discussed below.

(Cic. *Ad Att.* 4.16.8; App. *BCiv.* 2.102). The site chosen for the Forum Julium was probably decided by its proximity to the Forum Romanum and by the willingness of land owners to sell for its construction, even if the plot for the forum alone cost one hundred million sesterces (Suet. *Iul.* 26.2; Plin. *HN* 36.103), and the axis of the Forum Julium was likely chosen because of the alignment of the street *Argiletum*.⁹

It was in 44 BCE that the most important reconstruction of the Curia began and at this point, the task fell to Julius Caesar, then Dictator. The Senate ordered that Caesar, among other projects, build a new Curia, since the location of the old Curia, built by Faustus Sulla, was to become home to the Temple of Felicitas.¹⁰ However, that the Curia should be removed for this temple was only the Senate's pretext, according to Dio, and the body's true purpose was to remove a Cornelian creation and to replace it with a Julian structure (Dio Cass. 44.5.1-2). A portion of the Senate were Caesar's partisans and would thus have supported giving him this honor, and those Senators who were not his supporters may have simply wished to appease the current dictator. Furthermore, because Sittius, a supporter of Caesar, had killed Faustus Sulla in 46 BCE, there would have been no political backlash for dishonoring the Cornelian *gens* in such a way.¹¹ Additionally, according to Plutarch, enemies of Caesar vied with his flatterers for the opportunity to

⁹ Claridge, 148.

¹⁰ The chronology of Lepidus's construction of the Temple of Felicitas is problematic. Dio claims that Lepidus, the Magister Equitum, built the structure (Dio Cass. 44.5.2). If this project had begun in 44 BCE, it is inconceivable that the project could have been finished while Lepidus was still Magister Equitum. When Caesar was murdered in March, the office of Magister Equitum would have been vacated since that of Dictator was no longer filled. Furthermore, Antony soon after banned the office of Dictator (App. *BCiv.* 3.25; Livy *Per.* 116.7), which suggests that the office of Magister Equitum must also have been banned. To resolve Dio's claim that Lepidus, Magister Equitum, constructed the Temple of Felicitas, requires that the Curia had been demolished some time prior to the Senate's assignment of its reconstruction in 44 BCE and that Lepidus had been working on the Temple of Felicitas for some time, or that Lepidus completed the temple some time after the end of his office and that Dio provides Lepidus's title not for the purpose of identifying the time of the temple's construction, but for another purpose, such as to specify this particular Lepidus.

¹¹ T. Robert S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, Vol. 2 (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1952), 297.

grant him excessive honors in order to tarnish his reputation and in order to provide more pretexts for opposing him (Plut. *Caes.* 57.2-3). It is possible, however, that Dio is incorrect about the Senate's motivation to move the structure. The Senate may have had no motivation to move the Curia and just decided not to (or did not have the political clout to) resist Caesar's decision to move the building.¹²

Caesar's motivations for undertaking the task of moving the Curia include the desire to honor himself and his *gens* with its construction, and he may also have wished to dishonor the Cornelian *gens*.¹³ It is also possible that Dio's attribution to the Senate of the desire to make room for the Temple of Felicitas is incorrect and that instead, Caesar sought this topographical change as part of his plan to rearrange the northern Forum, even if the structure was to be built by Lepidus, his Magister Equitum. This location for the Temple of Felicitas would have been especially important to Caesar, particularly because of its prominence in the Forum and because of its proximity to the Forum Julium

¹² Caesar's level of control is debatable, but Appian makes it very clear that after Pompey fled from Rome, Caesar was chosen dictator without legal approval from the Senate or other magistrates, but by means of the power of his army (App. *BCiv.* 2.48), and after the battle of Pharsalus, as Dio reports, Caesar received legal power to make war at will without the consent or even communication with the Senate or the people. Dio also argues that Caesar did not even require this legal power, since he had the power of a large armed force (Dio Cass. 42.20.1-2).

¹³ Although Caesar restored the statue of Sulla that stood atop the Rostra (Dio Cass. 43.49.1) and Publius Cornelius Sulla was his commander of the right wing of his army at the battle of Pharsalus, there was some bad blood between Caesar and Sulla, and Faustus Sulla had been an enemy of Caesar's until the end of his life. Caesar's paternal aunt married Marius the Elder (Plut. *Caes.* 1.2), which made Caesar a political opponent of Sulla's at a young age. Plutarch also claims that Sulla was only stopped from proscribing Caesar by others who claimed that there was no threat in one so young (Plut. *Caes.* 1.4). Caesar had an even greater reason to hold a grudge against Sulla's son, Faustus, than he did his father. In addition to offering his daughter Julia to Pompey, he, according to Suetonius, sought to marry Pompey's daughter, who was promised to Faustus Sulla (Suet. *Iul.* 27.1). According to Plutarch, Caesar sought to marry Servilius Caepio, who had been betrothed to his daughter Julia, whom he had just offered to Pompey, to Pompey's daughter, but she was promised to Faustus Sulla (Plut. *Caes.* 14.7). Whichever narrative is correct, Caesar failed to secure Pompey's daughter on account of her eventual marriage to Faustus Sulla. In addition to this potential frustration, Faustus Sulla was a partisan of Pompey who recruited troops for him before meeting him in Epirus, and he fled to Africa to regroup with other Pompeian partisans after Pharsalus (Broughton, 261, 276). Ultimately, Sittius, a supporter of Caesar, killed Faustus Sulla in 46 BCE, instead of sparing him as many other of Caesar's enemies were spared (Broughton, 297). Thus, there are many potential reasons that Caesar may have felt bitterness toward this benefactor of the Curia.

and the Temple of Venus Genetrix. Caesar had used “Felicitas” as his watchword in his successful and decisive Battle of Thapsus in Spain (*BAfr.* 83.1), and it is therefore appropriate that this temple, possibly an offering of thanks to goddess Felicitas for his victory, would stand near to the Temple of Venus Genetrix, his most important manubial temple. Another motivation for Caesar could have been an opportunity to enlarge the Curia for his expanded Senate, as Sulla had done.¹⁴ Caesar had expanded the Senate (Dio Cass. 42.51.5), and it exceeded one thousand members before Augustus revised its membership (Suet. *Aug.* 35.1), so it may have been Caesar’s plan to create a larger structure than the Curia of Faustus Sulla and larger than the one that Augustus eventually built.

Whether or not Dio is correct in explaining the initial reasons for the movement of the Curia, the Curia of Faustus Sulla was demolished and Lepidus began construction of the Temple of Felicitas in its place. Therefore, a location must have already been decided upon for the construction of the new Curia, and since the project was assigned to Caesar and since the new location would abut his Forum Julium, it is probable that Caesar chose its new position. It has been a scholarly trend to read Caesar’s location for the Curia as a symbol of the diminishing Republic and the rising Empire or to assume that Caesar chose this location in order to affront the Senate.¹⁵ However, this location, slightly southeast of its former location, adjacent to the Basilica Aemilia and on axis with the Forum Julium, was part of Caesar’s larger Forum rearrangement plan that made practical, topographical, and symbolic sense and that would be confirmed by both the Senate and Augustus as a

¹⁴ John E. Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 113.

¹⁵ Aicher, 86-88; Claridge, 62; Stambaugh, 117.

reasonable rearrangement plan. The new arrangement would also establish a new and simplified hierarchy of axes and would ease congestion in the northern Forum.

For most of the Republican period, the Forum Romanum had two main axes, one north-south axis defined by the Curia, the Comitium, the Rostra, and possibly the Basilica Porcia, and one northwest-southeast axis defined by the buildings along the perimeter of the Forum rectangle (see Figure 2). Just before and during Caesar's dictatorship, a new axis came to be defined by the Forum Julium, creating a total of three competing axes (see Figure 1). At this time the most prominent axis was that of the Forum rectangle, being supported by the Temple of Concord, the Basilica Opimia, the Temple of Saturn, the Basilica Julia, the Temple of Castor and Pollux, the Regia, and the Basilica Aemilia. In 52 BCE, the fire from Clodius's funeral destroyed the Curia, and it probably consumed the Basilica Porcia, which may have been built on axis with the Curia, and the Comitium amphitheater. The Curia was rebuilt by Faustus Sulla, but that the other structures were restored is unlikely. At this point, the Curia's axis was supported only by the Rostra.

In 46 BCE, Caesar moved the Rostra from the Curia's axis to the axis of the Forum rectangle, on its northwest end (Dio Cass. 43.49.1-2). Speakers atop the Rostra originally faced the Comitium and Curia Hostilia while speaking, but a new trend began, according to Cicero, when Gaius Licinius Crassus, in 145 BCE (Cic. *Amic.* 25), or, according to Plutarch, when Gaius Gracchus, in 124 BCE (Plut *C. Gracch.* 5.3), faced the other direction to address those assembled in the open space of the Forum Romanum. This trend grew in the Late Republic and therefore it is no surprise that Caesar decided to move the Rostra to increase space for those gathered. The removal of the Rostra from the Curia's axis was extremely important topographically, because the Rostra was *the* focal

point of the Forum Romanum.¹⁶ In fact, Pliny the Elder reports that the Senate, intending to honor Gnaeus Octavius, ordered for a statue to be placed [*oculatissimo loco, eaque est in rostris*] in the most viewed place, and that is upon the Rostra (Plin. *HN* 34.24). At the removal of the Rostra, the Forum rectangle firmly established itself as the dominant axis of the Forum (although the axis of the Forum Julium would grow in importance with the addition of other imperial fora). The Curia no longer dominated the Comitium and the Rostra, and with these structures removed, it no longer had an axis of its own. Instead, although a prominent building, it was an off-kilter structure, and there was no longer a topographical reason to keep the Curia anchored to its original position.

The new position of the Curia made much more topographical sense. Instead of preserving a remnant of a third axis of the Forum, Caesar removed this axis altogether and simplified the topography of the area by joining the Curia with the axis of the Forum Julium (see Figures 1 and 3). Additionally, the new location of the Curia helped to solve the Forum Romanum's crowding problem. With the Comitium gone and the new Saepta Julia to be built in the Campus Martius for voting and meetings of various *comitia*, and also with the Rostra moved into the Forum rectangle, the only building that blocked passage between the Forum Romanum and the Forum Julium was the Curia. In its new location, however, a thoroughfare and a visual link opened between Rome's two fora. Additionally, the close proximity of Curia Julia to the Forum Julium would allow the

¹⁶ The Rostra was the site of important public funerals (Polyb. 6.53.1-3), including, for example, those of Sulla (App. *BCiv.* 1.106), Clodius (App. *BCiv.* 2.21), and Caesar (App. *BCiv.* 2.143); home to important statues, such as Sulla, Pompey, two of Julius Caesar, and one of Augustus (Dio Cass. 42.18.1-2, 44.4.5; Suet. *Iul.* 75.4; Plin. *HN* 34.24; Vell. Pat. 61.3); time and again the stage for displays of body parts, especially of those killed or proscribed for political purposes by Marius (Dio Cass. 31.102.8-9), Sulla (Dio Cass. 33.109.21), and the Second Triumvirate (Dio Cass. 47.3.1-2; App. *BCiv.* 4.11, 4.15; Plut. *Ant.* 20.2, *Cic* 49.1-2); and the stage of important events intended to be viewed by the masses, such as Antony's attempted crowning of Caesar during the Lupercalia in 44 BCE (Plut. *Caes.* 61.4; Vell. Pat. 56.4; App. *BCiv.* 2.109; Dio Cass. 44.11.1-3).

Senate access to the Forum Julium's barrel vaulted chambers, in which the Senate may have had smaller meetings or stored furniture. Furthermore, the Curia Julia provided a link between the Forum Romanum, which it faced, and the Forum Julium, on the axis of which it rested and into which its back doors led. The Senate would have appreciated the new location of the Curia because it would not only face the Rostra, as it once had, but also the speakers atop the Rostra, who could now face both the people gathered in the Forum's center and the Curia simultaneously. Additionally, Caesar may have picked the Curia's new location in order to form a symbolic link between the fora and thus a harmonious appearance of government.

Caesar transformed the northern Forum Romanum by removing the haphazard axis of the Curia, adding a new axis with the creation of the Forum Julium, having the Temple of Felicitas built near his Temple of Venus Genetrix, moving the Rostra to the Forum's open space where more people could gather, choosing the new location of the Curia so that it would now face orators on the Rostra and so that it would have convenient access to both fora, and creating an open space between the fora to create a visual link and ambulatory efficiency.

Although the scholarly preference is to attribute some portion of the construction of the Curia to Caesar and the remainder to Augustus, the *Res Gestae* and Dio's narrative suggest that Augustus should be credited for the entire construction of the building. Augustus, in his *Res Gestae*, claims: "*curiam et continens ei chalcidicum ... feci*" (Aug. *R.G.* 19). His use of the verb *facere* stands in contrast to the verb *perficere*, which he uses to describe his completion of the Forum Julium and the Basilica Julia (Aug. *R.G.* 20), which were started, substantially constructed, and dedicated by Caesar before his death

(Dio Cass. 44.22.2-3; Aug. *R.G.* 20). Of the nineteen works for which he employs the verb *facere*, nine are confirmed new works, three are new constructions of previous buildings, two are either new constructions of previous buildings or extensive restorations of previous buildings, and the meaning of *facere* with respect to the remaining five structures cannot be discerned.¹⁷ Therefore, it appears that Augustus uses the verb *facere* for buildings newly constructed, buildings demolished and rebuilt, and perhaps for buildings requiring extensive repair, and he uses *perficere* for buildings brought from a state of partial completion to completion. Had Augustus finished a *curia* begun by Caesar, he likely would have used the verb *perficere* and thus not missed the opportunity to list the Curia Julia amongst the two other buildings begun by his adoptive father. However, since he used the verb *facere*, he appears to be claiming full construction of the building. Additionally, the summary section of the *Res Gestae*, written by another author (as indicated by the shift from first person to third person), calls the buildings for which Augustus employed the verb *facere* new works [*opera nova*]. Thus, an informed reading of the *Res Gestae* indicates that Augustus did claim to build the Curia Julia.

Confirming Augustus's claim, the chronology of Dio's narrative suggests that the Curia Julia was built completely after Caesar's death. The first mention of the project is in early 44 BCE, the time at which the Senate assigned Caesar the task of building a new Curia and at which he accepted the task (Dio Cass. 44.5.1-2). Dio does not state whether or not Caesar began working on the project in the couple of months before his murder. Later in his narrative, however, Dio reports:

•πεγένετο μ•ν ο•ν κα• λοιμ•ς •π• α•το•ς πάσ• •ς ε•πε•ν τ• •ταλί•
 •σχυρός, κα• δι• το•το τό τε βουλευτήριον τ• •στίλιον •νοικοδομηθ•ναι κα•

¹⁷ For more detailed analysis of Augustus's building vocabulary in his *Res Gestae*, consult Figure 4 below.

τ• χωρίον • ν • • ναυμαχία • γεγόνει συγχωσθ•ναι • ψηφίσθη. (Dio Cass. 45.17.8)

And now a terrible pestilence approached after these [portents] over nearly all of Italy, and on account of this thing, they [the Senators] voted that the Curia Hostilia be rebuilt and that the place in which the *naumachia* had happened be filled in with earth.

Dio claims that the Senate was motivated to rebuild the Curia because of a series of evil portents and a plague, and thus, if his account can be trusted, it is clear that the project was begun at this point. The dating of the commencement of the Curia's reconstruction is easily discerned, because Dio gives many contemporaneous events in the same passage. Dio gives the consulship of Aulus Hirtius and Gaius Vibius for the date (Dio Cass. 45.17.1), and they were consuls for the year 43 BCE.¹⁸ The passage can also be dated by Dio's account of the sunlight's three circles, which corresponded to Augustus, Lepidus, and Antony, the members of the Second Triumvirate (Dio Cass. 45.17.5) and by Dio's account of the dogs that would howl outside the house of Lepidus, the Pontifex Maximus (Dio Cass. 45.17.7).

While the commencement of the construction of the Curia Julia can be established in 43 BCE by this passage, the agent of its construction is not identified until later in Dio's narrative. Listing the ways in which Augustus, Lepidus, and Antony sought to honor Caesar, Dio brings up the construction of the Curia Julia once more (Dio Cass. 47.19.1). However, the degree to which the structure was built at this time is undeterminable and it is unclear whether Dio means to attribute this portion of the building project to the entire Second Triumvirate or if, as he implies later, Augustus claims sole responsibility for the project even at this point, being the son of Caesar, to whom the project was originally assigned. It is not until Antony is defeated that Dio's

¹⁸ Broughton, 334.

narrative again mentions the Curia building project. He says that Augustus dedicated the Curia Julia in honor of Caesar in 29 BCE (Dio Cass. 51.22.1).

One curious passage in Dio contradicts the rest of his chronology, however. In his oration over Caesar's body, according to Dio, Antony says: Caesar [•ν τ• βουλευτηρί• κατασφαγε•ς • κα• •διον •λλο κατασκευάσας] having been murdered in the *curia*, he who constructed another same structure (Dio Cass. 44.49.2). It is possible to resolve this passage by assuming that the structure to which Dio has Antony refer is one other than the Curia Julia. Since Caesar was killed in the *curia* of the Theater of Pompey, he may refer to the wooden theater that Caesar created and in which he held hunting games (Dio Cass. 43.22.3). Another more likely explanation is that Dio's account of Antony's speech is artificially constructed and that he gives Caesar, although assigned the task of rebuilding the Curia, undue credit for the construction of the Curia Julia, simply so that the rhetoric of Antony's speech is more potent. Even if this passage does contradict the rest of Dio's narrative, then the more substantially represented account, that the Curia Julia was constructed after Caesar's death, is the stronger read, and this much smaller contradiction ought to be disregarded. Thus Dio's narrative, though somewhat confused, suggests that Augustus is to credit for building of the Curia Julia.

Augustus, although taking up the Curia project devised by Caesar, had additional political aims beyond confirming Caesar's reorganization of Forum space. He was motivated to undertake the construction of the Curia both as a means to associate himself with Caesar and to promote his own image. There was a social expectation for descendants to complete and maintain building projects begun by their ancestors, which explains in part why Augustus took up many of Caesar's unfinished projects and brought

to life many of Caesar's planned projects, but Augustus also sought to gain political clout by becoming Caesar's political successor. For this end, in the context of the Curia, he named the structure the Curia Julia, after their shared *gens*. Additionally, Augustus meant to establish his connection to Caesar through cult observation within the Curia. He placed the statue of Victory in the Curia (Dio Cass. 51.22.1) and required prayers to be given to Victory in the Curia whenever the Senate met.¹⁹ Thus, Augustus not only honored Caesar's association with Victory, but also reminded visitors to the Curia that the Julian *gens* was responsible for countless victories for Rome.²⁰

Augustus's attempt to associate himself with Caesar by means of public works extended beyond the Curia as well. He did this by bringing to life building plans that Caesar had devised, finishing incomplete projects, and honoring Caesar with these projects. For instance, the Saepta Julia was conceived by Caesar at least by 54 BCE (Cic. *Ad Att.* 4.16.8) and was begun by Lepidus. Ultimately, it was dedicated by Agrippa in honor of Augustus's and his *gens* in 26 BCE (Dio Cass. 53.23.1-4). By completing this project, Augustus accomplished an aim of Caesar's Forum rearrangement plan. Voting and some meetings of *comitia* moved from the Comitium area to the Saepta Julia and thus cleared space between the Forum Romanum and the Forum Julium. Another project that Augustus completed was the Basilica Julia, which was mostly completed and then dedicated by Caesar in 46 BCE (Hier. ab. Abr. 1971). Additionally, Augustus, after the Basilica Julia burned, created an enlarged structure on the site in honor of his adopted sons Gaius and Lucius (Aug. *R.G.* 20; Suet. *Aug.* 29.4).

¹⁹ Stefan Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), 111.

²⁰ For Caesar's association with Victory, see Weinstock, pp. 93-111.

The theater that would be built and named the Theater of Marcellus by Augustus was conceived by Caesar, who went as far as to tear down buildings in the Forum Holitorium and to lay foundations before his death. Augustus, after purchasing additional land and presumably expanding the foundations, built the theater, dedicating it to his nephew Marcus Marcellus, and justified Caesar's demolitions (Dio Cass. 43.49.2-3, 53.30.4-6, 54.26.1; Suet. *Aug.* 29.4; *Aug. R.G.* 21). Furthermore, Caesar, who had cultivated an association with Mars, in instances such as his sacrifice to Mars prior to the Battle of Pharsalus (App. *BCiv.* 2.68), planned to build a magnificent temple to Mars (Suet. *Iul.* 44.1). Augustus built the Temple to Mars Ultor, which he had vowed at the Battle of Philippi, in his own imperial forum, at the cost of one hundred million sesterces (Aug. *R.G.* 21; Suet. *Aug.* 29.1-2), thereby associating himself with Caesar not only by creating a symbol of his vengeance upon his father's assassins, but also in that he built a marvelous temple to Mars as his father had planned to do.

As early as 54 BCE, Caesar began plans for an extension of the Forum Romanum (Cic. *Ad Att.* 4.16.8) and vowed a temple to Venus Victrix before the Battle of Pharsalus (App. *BCiv.* 2.68). Ultimately, he dedicated the Forum Julium, an autonomous forum rather than an extension of the earlier Forum, and a temple to Venus Genetrix, mother of the Julian *gens*, rather than to Venus Victrix, bringer of Victory, in 46 BCE (Dio Cass. 43.22.2). He intended to use the Forum Julium for public business (App. *BCiv.* 2.102) and did so before his murder (App. *BCiv.* 2.107). Augustus, however, finished the Forum Julium (Aug. *R.G.* 20) and turned this public space into a memorial to Caesar by placing in the Temple of Venus Genetrix a statue of Cleopatra (Dio Cass. 51.22.3) and a bronze statue of Caesar with a star above his head, signifying the comet that had shined soon

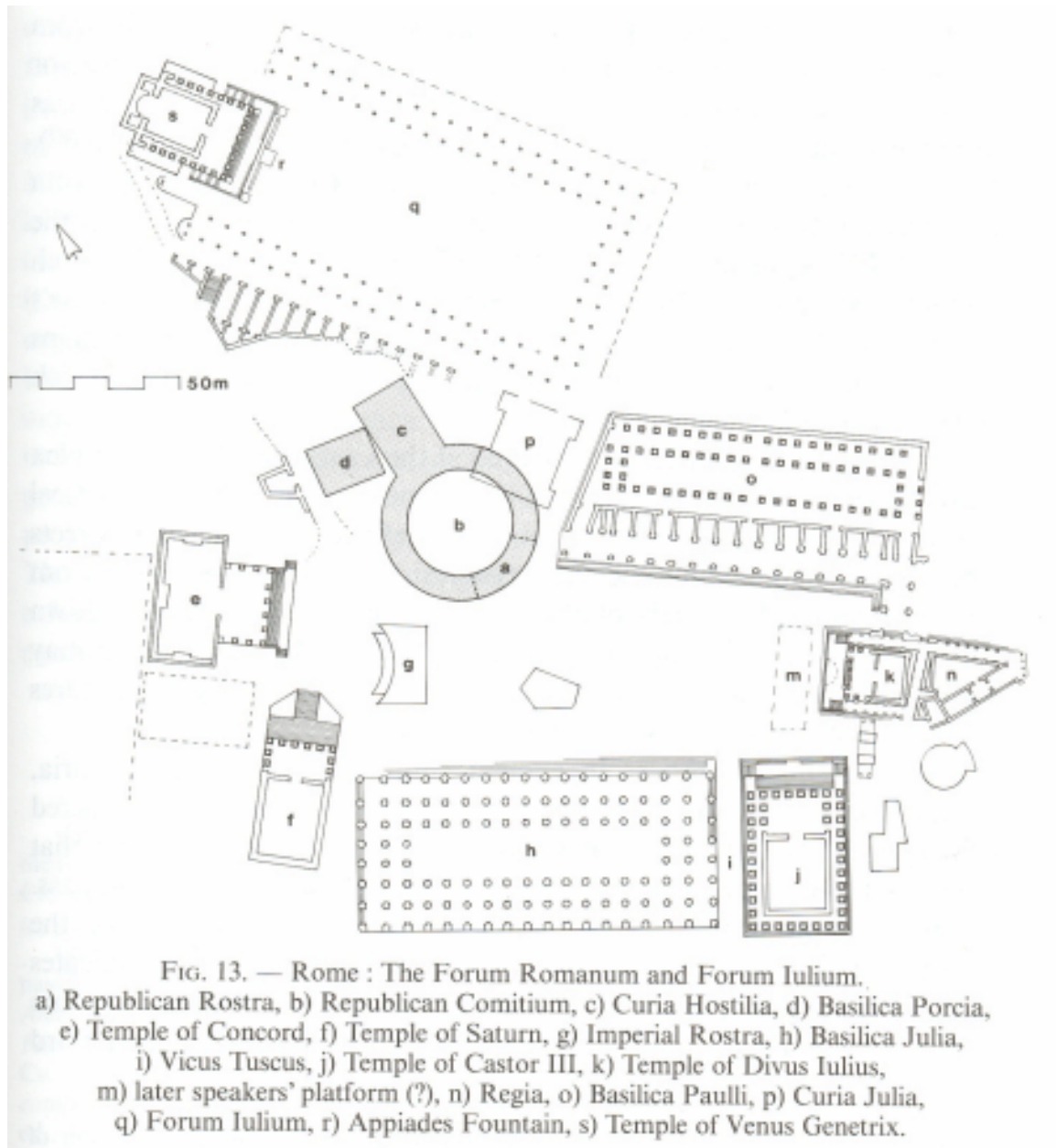
after Caesar's death and which was regarded to be a sign of his apotheosis (Dio Cass. 45.7.1-2; Suet. *Iul.* 88). Augustus also converted public space into a memorial with the Temple of Divus Julius. After Caesar's death, a man named Amatius erected an altar on the site of his funeral pyre at the southeast end of the Forum Romanum (App. *BCiv.* 3.2). Augustus or the Second Triumvirate together laid the foundation for the Temple of Divus Julius in the same spot (Dio Cass. 47.18.4), and the temple was eventually dedicated by Augustus (Aug. *R.G.* 19). Not only did Augustus honor Caesar by building a temple dedicated to him, but also copied the architectural style of Caesar's Temple of Venus Genetrix, both with a frontal rostra and with pycnostyle intercolumniation (Vitr. *De Arch.* 3.3.2). Augustus also brought order to the Forum rectangle by closing off its southeastern end and by creating a symmetrical rostra that would face the main Rosta, which Caesar had moved and Augustus had expanded. Even though Augustus would later downplay his association with Caesar, projects like the Curia, in his early years, were useful to Augustus as he attempted to become Caesar's political successor and to establish order by means of assuming control as Caesar had.

The Curia Julia not only played a role in Augustus's attempt to become Caesar's political successor, but also fostered his own reputation once it was finished and once he had established control in Rome. When Octavian was given the title Augustus in 27 BCE, in the Curia was placed a golden shield in honor of Augustus inscribed with the testimony that the Senate and people of Rome honored his virtue, clemency, justice, and piety (Aug. *R.G.* 34). Additionally, the people first and then the Senate also honored Augustus by giving him the title *Pater Patriae* (Suet. *Aug.* 58.1-2), and this title was inscribed in the Curia Julia (Aug. *R.G.* 35). Whether these testimonies to Augustus's

virtues were spontaneously awarded him by the Senate or whether they were awarded only after pressure from Augustus or his partisans, they played a role in the image that Augustus sought to craft for himself.

The movement of the Curia was a 15-year process from its inception to its dedication, and its separate phases, devised by separate builders, strove to accomplish different aims. Although the task of moving the Curia originally fell to Caesar and although the building's location was cleverly devised as part of his Forum rearrangement plan prior to Augustus's assumption of the task, the actual Curia Julia ought not to be interpreted as Caesar's vision, but as an Augustan structure that would play a role in promoting Augustan ideals. The Curia, once a venue for governance, had taken on a second purpose by transforming into an Augustan symbol just as the Forum Julium had become a memorial for Caesar before it. Topographically, the Curia Julia promoted Augustan peace and harmony by serving as a link between the Forum Romanum, an ancient Republican space, and the Forum Julium, a new memorial for Julius Caesar, a symbol of the benefaction of the Julian *gens*, and a space through which one would travel in order to reach the Forum Augustum. Additionally, the Curia Julia testified Augustus's paternal role for Rome with the Pater Patriae inscription, the wartime prowess of Caesar and Augustus with the statue of Victory, and Augustus's praiseworthiness with the golden shield and its testimony of the qualities of Rome's *Principes*.

Figure 1: Plan of the Forum Romanum and Forum Iulium



Source: R.B. Ulrich, *The Roman Orator and the Sacred Stage: The Roman Templum Rostratum* (Bruxelles: Latomus Revue d'Études Latines, 1994), 77.

Figure 2: The Forum Romanum (Late Republic)

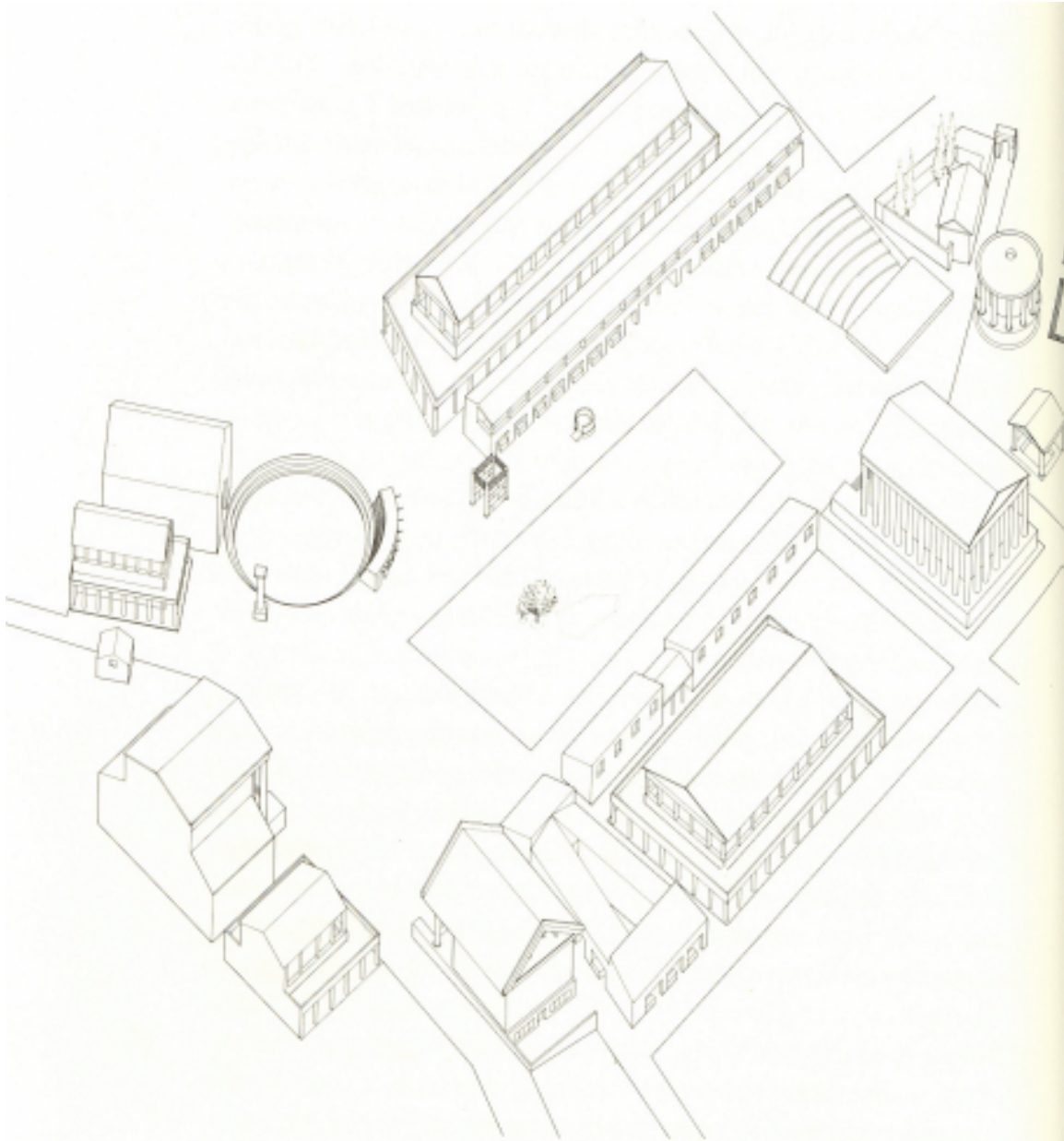
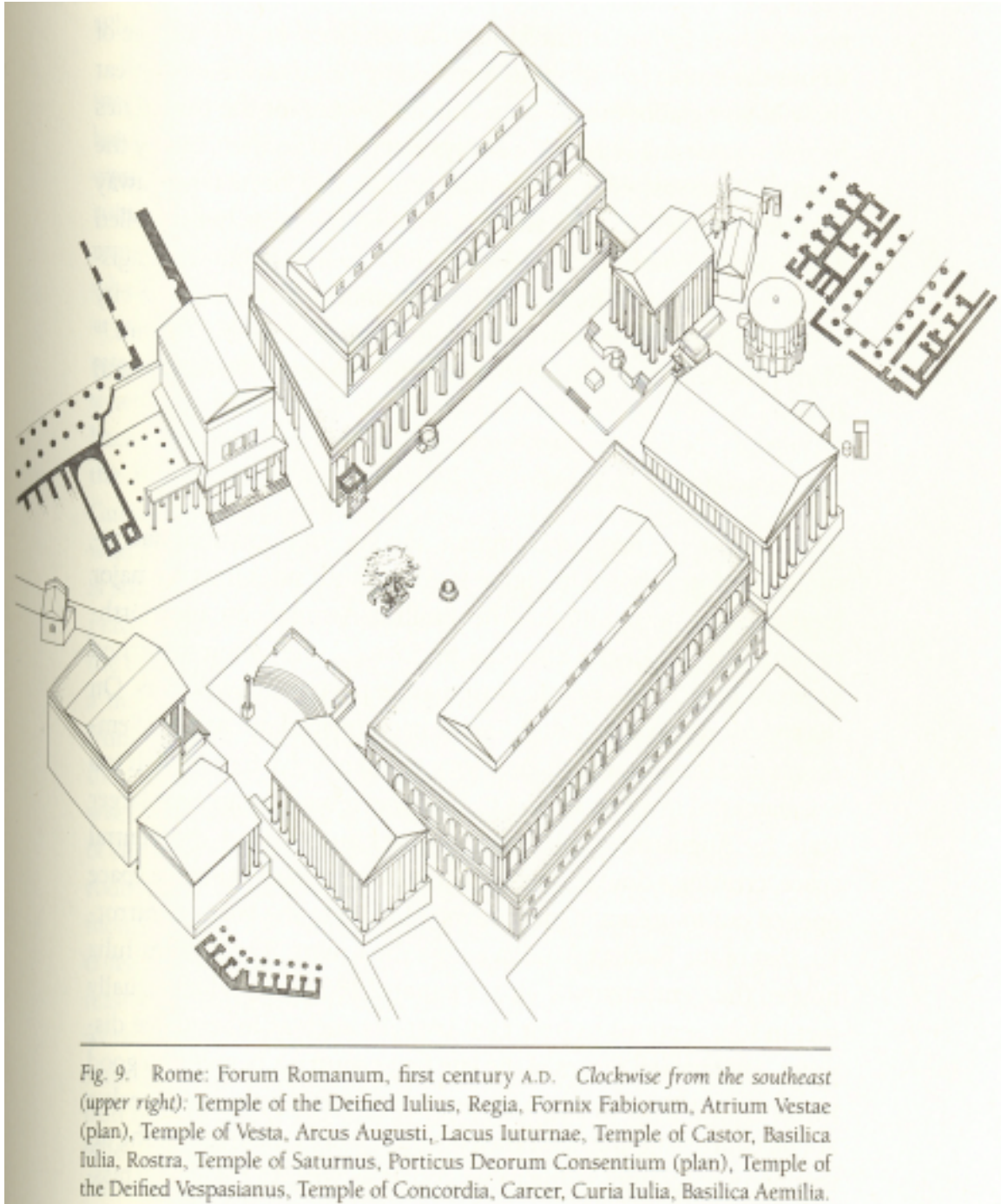


Fig. 8. Rome: Forum Romanum, second century B.C. Clockwise from the southeast (upper right): Tribunal Aurelium, Regia, Fornix Fabiorum, Temple of Vesta, Atrium Vestae (plan), Lacus Iuturnae, Temple of Castor, Tabernae Veteres, Basilica Sempronia, Temple of Saturnus, Basilica Opimia, Temple of Concordia, Carcer, Basilica Porcia, Curia, Comitium and Columna Maeniana, Rostra, Shrine of Ianus, Shrine of Venus Cloacina, Tabernae Novae, Basilica Aemilia.

Source: John E. Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 112.

Figure 3: The Forum Romanum (Early Empire)



Source: John E. Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 115.

Figure 4: Augustus's Building Claims

Verb of Construction	Building in Question	Work Done By Augustus	Source
facere	Curia	Construction	Dio Cass. 47.19.1, 51.22.1
	Chalcidicum	Construction	Dio Cass. 51.22.1
	Temple of Apollo on the Palatine	Construction	Prop 2.31.9; Dio Cass. 49.15.5; Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 29.1
	Temple of Divus Julius	Construction	Dio Cass. 47.18.4; App. <i>BCiv.</i> 2.148
	Porticus Octaviae	Construction	Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 29.4; Dio Cass. 49.43.8
	Lupercal	Unknown	X
	Temple of Jupiter Feretrius	Restoration or Reconstruction	Nep. <i>Att.</i> 20.3
	Temple of Jupiter Tonans	Construction	Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 29.1; Dio Cass. 54.4.2; Mart. 7.60.2
	Temple of Quirinus	Reconstruction	Dio Cass. 54.19.4
	Temple of Minerva	Restoration or Reconstruction	Dio Cass. 51.22.1
	Temple of Juno Regina	Unknown	X
	Temple of Jupiter Libertas	Unknown	X
	Temple of the Lares	Unknown	X
	Temple of the Di Penantes	Unknown	X
	Temple of Youth	Reconstruction	Dio Cass. 54.19.7 (record of its burning)
	Temple of Magna Mater	Reconstruction	Ov. <i>Fast.</i> 4.347-348
	Temple of Mars Ultor	Construction	Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 29.1; Dio Cass. 55.10.1
	Forum Augustum	Construction	Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 29.1; Dio Cass. 55.10.1
	Theater of Marcellus	Construction	Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 29.4; Dio Cass. 44.26.1
reficere	Capitolium	Unknown	X
	Theater of Pompey	Probable Restoration	Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 31.5
	82 temples requiring repair	Probable Restoration	Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 30.2
perficere	Forum Julium	Completion	Dio Cass. 45.6.4
	Basilica Julia	Completion	Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 29.4
incohare	Basilica of Gaius and Lucius	Construction	Suet. <i>Aug.</i> 29.4

Works Cited

- Aicher, Peter J. *Rome Ailve: A Source-Guide to the Ancient City*, Vol. 1. Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2004.
- Broughton, T. Robert S., *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, Vol. 2. Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1952.
- Claridge, Amanda. *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Richardson, L. Jr. *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Stambaugh, John E. *The Ancient Roman City*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.
- Ulrich, R.B. *The Roman Orator and the Sacred Stage: The Roman Templum Rostratum*. Bruxelles: Latomus Revue d'Études Latines, 1994.
- Weinstock, Stefan. *Divus Julius*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971.